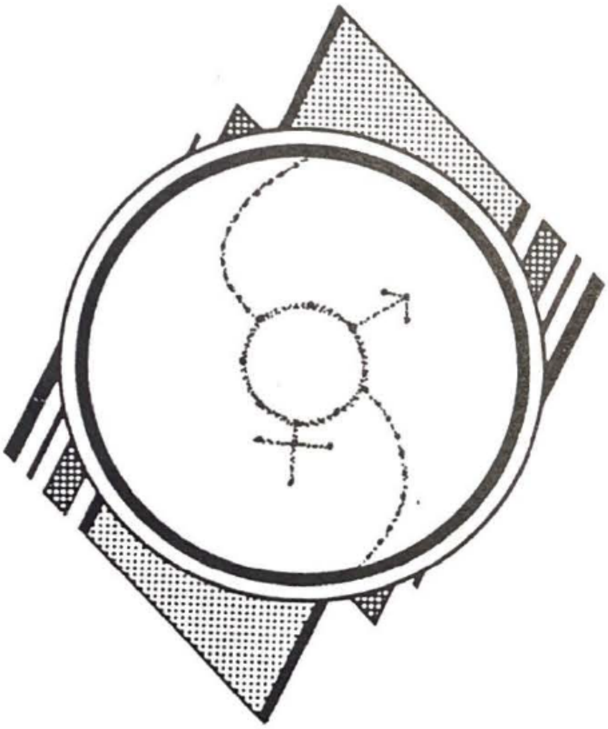
The Magazine for Bisexuals

BI-MONTHLY

No.9 50p



in this issue:
bi-conferences,
bi-group news,
book reviews,
American news.

The Second Politics of Bisexuality Conference

Under the cloud of controversy surrounding the banning of bisexual groups from the London Lesbian and Gay Centre and amidst a certain amount of bad feeling resulting from this, the Second Politics of Bisexuality Conference went ahead at the Centre on Saturday and Sunday 13th and 14th April. Since the conference booking had been accepted 'in error' before the ban was imposed, the Centre Management had agreed to honour this one exceptional booking.

People came from as far afield as the West of Ireland, Edinburgh, Wales, Newcastle, Bradford, Hull, Norwich and Swindon. Over 50 were present on Saturday of whom more than half were women. On Sunday about a third of the 45 participants were women.

> 'at last here are some people who will understand what I am trying to say about my life...'

The conference was arranged and sponsored by the London Bisexual Group and despite a lack of tight organisation and forward planning the atmosphere throughout the weekend was warm, cheerful, thoughtful and at times emotional. Many people, especially from outside London, were almost overwhelmed by the feeling that'at last here are some people like me that I can talk to and who will understand what I am trying to say about my life'.

Saturday morning started with a short session of Non-Competitive Games. This was perhaps a little half-hearted and worked less well than at the first conference with the result that people felt less familiar with each other's names and less close than at the first conference. Despite this it was felt that the conference as a whole was much more positive on a political level than the last one.

The proposed programme was thrown out of the window almost immediately and a series of alternative topics for discussion in workshops was proposed. These included Bisexual Lifestyles, Bisexual Sexuality, Non-Monogamy, Feminism and Bisexuality (a women-only workshop), Relations with the Gay Community, Relations with the Women's Movement and Separatism, Heterosexual Power and Priviledge, Sexism, Androgyny, Sado-Masochism, and Towards a Bisexual Community.

Shared personal experiences of bisexuality were the order of the day, with many participants anxious to establish whether there was such a thing as an homogenous bisexual lifestyle or bisexual sexuality. Clearly there isn't. Nevertheless the discussions were by no means apolitical. There was a general feeling that the personal is political, and contributions to workshops showed that a great many lessons had been drawn from work in the Women's Movement, the Lesbian and Gay Movement, the Peace Campaigns, the Green Movement, the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers' Party, the Labour Party and the Trade Unions. One felt that new personal and political lessons were being learnt from discussion of issues surrounding bisexuality - which has been ignored, denigrated and even denied as a valid identity for too long. It was evident that people felt a certain amount of acrimony because of this, but it was also apparent that many participants had spent a great deal of time agonising about whether bisexuality really exists and about the political implications of affirming that it does exist and living a bisexual lifestyle. This affirmation is particularly difficult in the face of demands from the Lesbian and Feminist Movements not to give energy to men and demands from the Gay and Lesbian Movement not to sit on the fence. However there was a general concensus at the conference that a lively bisexual movement working with other agents for radical change was an important part of the fight for social and sexual liberation.

> 'bisexuality has been ignored, denigrated and even denied as a valid identity for too long...'

However, far from being smug about what bisexuals have to offer, a great deal of concern was expressed, in one of the most popular workshops, that bisexuals are able to cash in on the power and priviledge which accrues to heterosexuals in society at large. In the light of this it was agreed by the whole conference that if bisexual groups were eventually to be allowed to use the London Lesbian and Gay Centre such groups should undertake not to behave in a heterosexual manner since this would reinforce the oppression of lesbians and gay men and cause offence to members.

£102,000 denied to London Centre

The Government has blocked a £102,000 grant to the London Lesbian and Gay Centre. The money was to be used to pay wages and other running costs during the first year of the Centre after which it would become self-sufficient. The Centre has already cost over £1m. but is likely to close within six months if it cannot have this grant to see it through the initial teething period.

The Greater London Council, which has supported and financed the Centre so far, as part of its wide-ranging policy of backing projects to help minorities, offered the grant to the Centre. However, as a part of the run-up to the abolition of the G.L.C. the Government has adopted legislation by which certain grants are required to be ratified by the Department of the Environment.

When he announced the decision in the House of Commons, Local Government Minister, Kenneth Baker said that he had not considered whether the Centre was necessary nor whether lesbians and gay men suffered social discrimination. He said his reason for halting the grant was that there was no evidence that the users of the Centre were an 'economically deprived group'.

Valerie Wise, chair of the G.L.C.'s Women's Committee, said: 'the grant is intended to counter discrimination, not economic deprivation. The reason given by the minister for refusing is totally irrelevant. It's a transparent excuse for this government to discriminate against gays and lesbians. We aim to have the minister reverse his decision.'

Almost as if to confirm this view Kenneth Baker went on to refuse a £250 grant to the Friend coffee-bar cum meeting place in Islington, North London. Friend provides a 'drop-in' lunchtime and evening social venue and also hosts group meetings for women, the under-30's, and Transvestites and Transexuals. The grant would have been used to improve the facilities in the coffee-bar.

Several moves are afoot to try to get the Department of the Environment to change its mind. Paul Somerfield, director of the London Voluntary Service Council, is seeking a urgent meeting with Kenneth Baker to discuss the unexpected change in the criteria for awarding grants and the continuing delay of decisions about funding to other areas of the voluntary sector. G.L.C. lawyers are examining the problem hoping to find a legal means of challenging the decision. And an early day motion to have the decision debated in the House of Commons is being drafted. In connection with this Valerie Wise and Ken Livingstone are lobbying London MPs.

David Smith

London Lesbian and Gay Centre
bisexuals still banned

On Wednesday 27th March members of three bisexual groups (the London Bisexual Group, the Edinburgh Bisexual Group and the Radical Lesbian/Gay-Identified Bisexual Network met members of the Management Committee of the London Lesbian and Gay Centre to discuss the ban on meetings of bisexual groups at the Centre.

The meeting was noisy and emotional and the exchanges were heated. This was possibly due to the fact that the representatives of the bisexual groups had not prepared statements to be read to the Committee. Nevertheless, the following points were raised;
that by wanting to use the Centre for meetings members of bisexual groups were making positive personal statements of gayness;
that for many members of the groups the statements 'I am gay/a lesbian' and 'I am bisexual' are not mutually exclusive nor contradictory;
that many bisexuals are active in the lesbian and gay movement, in organisations such as Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, London Friend, Lesbian and Gay Pride Week Committee, Gay Bereavement Group, Friend TV/TS Group and in the London Lesbian and Gay Centre itself (as unpaid volunteers);
that bisexual groups fully support the aims of the L.L.G.C.'s constitution and feel that the aims and objectives of the bisexual groups represented at the meeting meet the criteria stipulated in the constitution.

In view of the fact that women members of the Centre had said that they felt threatened by the presence of bisexual men, it was pointed out that it was illogical to allow individual bisexuals to use the Centre but not bisexual groups.

The leading participants in the discussion on the Management Committee's side dismissed all of the points made and primarily made great play of the semantic problem - 'bisexual' people can not be 'lesbian and gay'. Because of this semantic problem the Management Committee seemed totally unwilling to accept that bisexuals groups want to be part of the lesbian and gay community. They insisted that the Centre is a space for lesbian and gay people to feel free from any pressures imposed by heterosexual society outside. They were in no way prepared to accept that members of bisexual groups need the same space to explore their gayness and are no more likely to be a cause of personal offence than any other unvetted individual using the Centre.

It was mooted that the ban might be reconsidered if bisexual groups were to change their names to lesbian/gay bisexual groups as in the case of the Radical Lesbian/Gay-Identified Bisexual Network.

Finally it was announced that despite a report in Gay News stating that the ban had been lifted along with the ban on S&M groups, that the ban still stood.

The representatives of the bisexual groups left the meeting feeling angry, insulted and rejected.

but confusion remains about who is banned

Who is banned?

When the London Bisexual Group first received a letter from the London Lesbian and Gay Centre stating that because 'bisexuals are not lesbian and gay' bisexual groups would not be allowed to book meeting space at the Centre, it was assumed that this ban applied to all bisexual groups. However, at the meeting with the Management Committee to discuss the ban, it was implied that because of the nature of its title the Radical Lesbian/Gay-Identified Bisexual Network would be allowed to meet at the Centre. One of the main objections to bisexual groups was that they had members who identified as heterosexual and that the Centre was intended to be a safe haven for lesbians and gay men from heterosexual harassment and oppression of any sort.

The Management Committee has also gone on record, in a statement to Capital Gay, to say that the ban applies only to the London Bisexual Group and not to the Radical Network or to the Edinburgh Bisexual Group. (Is this because the latter is hardly likely to want to book space in the London Centre?)

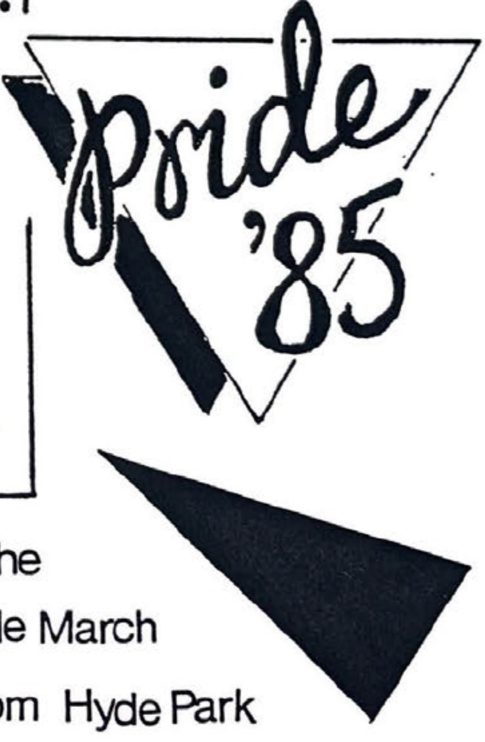
The matter has been further complicated by the fact that the London Women's Bisexual Group might want to book space in the Centre. The most heart-felt objections to bisexuals seem to come from lesbians who object strongly to the presence of bisexual men whom they see as heterosexual and a threat. It remains to be seen whether the same women will have any strong feelings about bisexual women. The Management Committee has not yet had the opportunity to rule on the matter.

Pride Week threat to pull out of Centre over banning

The Lesbian and Gay Pride Week Committee has threatened not to stage any events at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre if the Management Committee of the Centre does not reconsider its decision to ban bisexual groups from meeting at the Centre.

In an open letter to the Centre, the Committee said that several members of the London Bisexual Group were involved in Pride 85 and 'it will be very difficult to put Pride 85 into the Centre and retain the co-operation of our invaluable bisexual members.'

The letter went on to say, 'We naturally want to help the Centre in whatever way we can, but fear that our objectives may be pulling in a different direction from yours. We take the view that Pride 85 is an umbrella organisation for all forms of resistance to compulsory heterosexuality. That would include bisexuals, paedophiles, asexuals, transexuals as well as those who define themselves as lesbian and gay. We feel that their very involvement in Pride 85 constitutes sufficient gay solidarity. This is theoretically compatible with the Centre's aims,i.e."the promotion, encouragement and assistance of organisations, campaigns or projects whose main objects include the furthering of the social, political and economic advancement of lesbians and gay men"'.



Come join us in the

Gay Pride March

Sat. June 29th 2pm Hyde Park

A personal view of the Politics of Bisexuality Conference

I've decided to write a 'personal' response because I find I can't separate my personal feelings about the weekend from a 'critical' view of the conference as a whole. For me, living in Hull and having felt very isolated, the most important thing, and the one that kept me high through most of the weekend, was the chance to talk with, to share with, other bisexuals, to know I am not alone! It was really important too to hear for the first time the terms 'lesbian and gay-identified bisexuals' and to know that my own instinct to 'identify' as lesbian, while wanting to be accepted and acknowledged as bisexual, had a political validity and context which others were long aware of.

The issues I addressed over the weekend, in workshops and in conversation, were mostly ones I had already touched on in my own thoughts but, on my own, not got very far with. Working on them with other bisexuals, both with similar and different perspectives to myself, meant I could go further, feel stronger and more able to take leaps, to accept myself and to begin to understand others in a new way. We didn't find any 'answers', no conference 'line' was reached (we were too divergent and, dare I say, too honest for that) but, for me at least, there was an increased clarity, an increased positiveness about my sexuality and about myself as a whole person. And the openness and trust I felt at times during the conference was something rare and incredibly special.

Feminism and Bisexuality

NOT EVERYTHING about the conference was good. I was sickened by the negative response of some people (women and men) to the suggestion that a workshop on Feminism and Bisexuality should be women-only. How tired I am of hearing cries of 'divisive!' (is it divisive to want to meet others from a basis of my own history, my own oppression? Surely ackowledging difference is far more healthy than burying it?) and of 'If you don't want to work with everyone here, you should go away and meet somewhere else!' (surely that would have been more divisive?). For myself, I did want to work with everyone there (well, with most people!). As a matter of fact it was the first time for a long time that I have been at a mixed conference or meeting and felt free to pursue issues openly with men as well as women (it was really good, for example, to hear men using 'gay' as a political term, not just as the sexual or peer-group preference it is used for by most gay men in Hull). However on the issue of Feminism and Bisexuality I needed to talk to women - I needed, basically, to talk with other feminists (though I felt that it would be useful to talk to non-feminist women about the issue). How could I speak openly and honestly in front of men about the deep contradictions I feel between my emotional and sexual relationships with men and the belief that, if this society is going to change, women must withdraw their energy from men and give it to themselves and to other women so that, together, we can discover our strength that has been denied us for so long. This workshop did not solve the contradictions for me. It did, however, help me to feel more positive about living with them and through them (other women's challenges: 'If it's so awful, why go on with it?' 'I never said it was awful.'). I don't know if there are ever any clear-cut answers. I do know how important it is to share the questions.

Bisexual Sexuality

This was the best of all in terms of warmth, openness and trust. It was so good some of us had a second session of it on Sunday afternoon. It seems that the feelings were more important to me than what we actually talked about as I can't remember very much. We talked about the difference between sex with the same and the 'opposite' sex (ideas of sameness and otherness, of learning and recognition), whether it is wrong per se to objectify people (as opposed to male-female objectification with its context of power that we none of us defended), what attraction meant to us, what is the meaning of passion etc etc. Again, no real 'answers' but lots of good sharing.

Non-Monogamy

EVEN IN so-called 'non-monogamous' set-ups will people always have a 'primary relationship?' Is this just another form of monogamy or is it a move towards something different? How can we say that something is always true anyway? Am I deluding myself to think that I, or anyone else in my lifetime can be really non-monogamous? Am I right to believe jealousy is an unnecessary construct, or am I a biological deviant (that's what bisexuals are, isn't it?) to be seemingly devoid of any (or have I just never'been in love'?). Answers on a postcard please! Seriously though, I left this workshop more confused than I entered it. Are my ideas really ahead of their time or am I just a self-opinionated ranter? Has anyone else out there read 'Deliver us from Love' by Suzanne Brøgger (published by Quartet)? Comments please!

Heterosexual Privilege

For me this was no more than an attempt to face this issue and what it means to me - and a badly needed one. Rather than describe what happened in the workshop I'd like to continue the discussion by describing what happened to me the week after the conference.

Picture the scene - a spring day in Hull, warm sunshine (well, fairly warm!), sunlight on the grass of Queen's Gardens, the park in the centre of the city. On Tuesday lunchtime I meet my (male) lover in his lunch-hour and we sit on the grass, hold hands, hug, talk. No-one takes a blind bit of notice.

My lover: Look at those guys staring.
(I refuse to look.)

Fucking lemons!
(This from a woman abou our age - early twenties.)
Lemon - derogatory Hull colloquial term for lesbian.

My Lover: She's gone to that policeman.
(I don't believe it.)

(The policeman comes over, very macho, blocking out the sunlight.)

Policeman: I've had a complaint about you.
Me: We're not doing anything.
(I refuse to get up off my back which makes me feel at a disadvantage, hence the defensive answer.)
And so it goes on. What it boils down to is that if he gets another complaint he'll move us on.
Me: But what if we still haven't done anything?
(It seems that doesn't matter. A complaint's a complaint.)

Who said lesbianism wasn't illegal? And who was it who wasn't sure about heterosexual priviledge? (Could it have been me?)

open and positive

THE CONFERENCE AS A WHOLE could have been better organised I suppose, though the fact that it was organised at all was enough for me! How about having suggestions for workshops sent in before the next one, with only a limited space towards the end to fill in on the day? Flexibility is important but can lead to confusion unless controlled. Actually I though it went very well, especially since it was almost completely reorganised during the first day! Many thanks to all those involved.

And many thanks to all those who were there - I needed you! I have contact now with groups and individuals and I feel so much more supported. I've been much more open and positive about being bisexual since the conference. May there be many more!

AL

The lesbian and gay community has a right to make demands of bisexual people. We have to recognise our differences. Difference means division in a world where people are allocated power on the basis of their sex, sexuality, race, class and so on. So working together means making alliances based on mutuality i.e. recognising power/ powerless relations. Heterosexual behaviour is buying into heterosexual priviledge - it confirms heterosexism, however contradictory. So, when in straight relationships, bisexuals must be aware of the social meanings given through that i.e. power over lesbians and gay men. And if bisexuals want an alliance with non-bisexual lesbians and gay men they must recognise the power they potentially have, how they sometimes buy into power, why lesbians and gay men have that hostility (there are good reasons) and change. 'Alliances are processes in which both (all) partners become both the collective agents of change and the subjects of change.' (Bea Campbell)

Step

On Saturday the workshop seemed to find it useful to reflect on bisexuals' problems in fitting in with the gay and straight communities as a way of reflecting on what our sexuality meant to us. We didn't attempt to define what bisexuality was but felt more keen to discuss the difficulties in communicating our individual needs, preferences and rights to people we encountered daily. It seemed that some felt that sex with one partner of either sex still had 'something missing'. 'Like making love with one arm tied behind my back.' Another member of the group said that with a not especially sensitive partner it was more like 'making love with both arms tied behind my back.' It was the missing element that needed to be sought out in another partner of a different sex to the first partner (who may be just sensitive enough in bed to banish temporarily the feeling of something missing).

Liz

Because bisexual women, when they are in 'non-heterosexual' relationships, are relating to women (who are an oppressed group in our patriarchal culture), and men, when they are in 'non-heterosexual' relationships are relating to other men, members of the oppressor group, there are fundamental political differences in the nature of bisexuality for men and women. This is one of the reasons why some women felt that it is important for us to discuss bisexuality with each other and without men - as well as discussion in mixed groups.

Ae.

Bisexuals can cash in on the priviledges available to heterosexuals but gays cannot choose. Bisexuals tend to exploit both the hetero- and homosexual world.

Kate.

When bisexuality is accepted then oppression of gays and lesbians will end.

Paul

ANDROGYNY

Anyone has the right to define their own gender.

Rachel

There was some feeling that developing a bisexual identity/community based on the notion of a sexuality (about) half-way along a spectrum from hetero- to homosexual should be a stepping-stone towards people accepting a far wider range of sexual desire and experience than exists now. Ideally it might also challenge the idea that 'sexuality' was a feeling totally separate and distinct from other feelings of need for physical intimacy/caring (although sexuality as a feeling should not be totally equated with other feelings - simply related).

David

Conference Noticeboard!

ATTEMPT TO OVERTURN BAN

The first meeting of members of the London Lesbian and Gay Centre was an unpleasant affair. Tempers and emotions ran high. The ban on bisexual groups was touched on - 'Bisexual men are straight men and I don't want them here.' But the affair was overshadowed, as it has been in some of the gay press, by the S and M issue.

At the next meeting, on 9th June at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, the attached motion will be put. The motion came out of the Politics of Bisexuality Conference following discussions on Heterosexual Power and Privilege.

Motion to be considered by the extraordinary General Meeting of L.L.G.C. Ltd.

This General Meeting resolves that any bisexual group agreeing to the following statement should be allowed to book space in the L.L.G.C.:-

> 'As a bisexual group wishing to use the Centre we identify with the lesbian and gay liberation struggle and undertake to restrict our use of the Centre to holding meetings for business, political and consciousness-raising purposes consistent with the aims of the lesbian and gay liberation movement.
>
> We understand the oppression of lesbians and gays by heterosexuals and agree that the Centre is not an appropriate place for heterosexual behaviour. We undertake to behave in a way that does not reinforce this oppression or cause offence to members.'

Proposed by Kate Fearnley
Seconded by David Burkle

Bisexual Groups – new impetus after Conference

Brighton

The Second Politics of Bisexuality Conference seems to have given new impetus to bisexual groups. A new group has started up in Brighton and had its first meeting at the end of April. Brighton Bisexual Action Network (B.A.N.) meets fortnightly for discussion and planning meetings at 7.30p.m. on Tuesdays, starting from 28th May. The group is also planning an afternoon conference/festival on Sunday July 28th in Brighton. Ben and Sarah, who are the prime movers of the group, can be contacted through the London Bisexual Group, BM BI, London WC1N 3XX and hopefully also through Brighton Gay Switchboard (tel. 0273 690825) which operates nightly 8pm-10pm and on Saturday 6pm-10pm.

London Women

The London Women's Bisexual Group which has been meeting regularly for some time now, has acquired some new members but will welcome other women to their informal get-togethers in members' houses.

publishing project

At the Politics of Bisexuality Conference a group of people began work on a project to publish a booklet containing interviews with a range of bisexuals talking about their lifestyle. It was felt that there is a dearth of published material dealing with bisexuality and the bisexual experience.

Edinburgh

The Edinburgh Bisexual Group continues to meet on every 2nd and 4th Friday of the month at the Lesbian and Gay Centre, 58A Broughton Street in Edinburgh. Although still small, the group plans to host the next Politics of Bisexuality conference on 19th and 20th of October. Members are also involved in many other activities. Planning Gay Pride Week events for Edinburgh. Editing an education pack on homosexuality and bisexuality to be distributed by the Communist Party. Working for Gay Scotland. And contributing to the publishing project.

C.R. group

Is anyone in London interested in joining a consciousness-raising group? The groups will ideally consist of six people who will meet once a week for six weeks to discuss their own experience of all aspects of bisexuality.

ambitious book

Bisexual groups in Britain have been busy providing details of their activities to a writer in California. Dione Gold is planning an ambitious book dealing with bisexuality, transvestism and transexuality in the English-speaking world and is gathering information from the U.S.A., Canada, Britain, Ireland, South Africa, India, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia.

RADICAL ▽▽▽▽▽▽▽▽▽
LESBIAN + GAY
IDENTIFIED
BISEXUAL
NETWORK ▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

At the Politics of Bisexuality conference, a meet- of the Radical Lesbian and Gay Identified Bisexual Network decided to adopt (with a few alterations) the first of the draft manifestos published in Bi-Monthly No. 7. The amended text is printed below. The group now has 26 members spread throughout Britain and Eire.

the Network manifesto

Bisexuals are people who are oriented towards emotional and sexual relationships with people of both sexes.

We strongly support sexual freedom: the freedom of all people, regardless of age, sex or disability, to explore and define openly their own sexual styles, homosexual, bisexual, celibate, heterosexual, monogamous, promiscuous and non-monogamous, with others who share the same freedom and consent. This includes the right to refuse sexual contact with anyone for any reason and the rights of women and men to take responsibility for and to control their own fertility.

We believe that the prevailing heterosexist ideas about sexuality have created restrictive and damaging categories into which the diversity of human sexuality does not fit. We believe that bisexuality challenges the order and origins of these categories. However, whilst this sexual oppression exists, it is vital for bisexuals, lesbians and gay men to organise politically around their self-defined sexual identities. So it is important for bisexuals to be politically active within the lesbian and gay movement, working towards the reconstruction of sexuality without oppression.

We believe that sexual oppression is both a result of and an integral part of our patriarchal and capitalist society. Therefore we recognise the links between the oppression of people because of their sex, sexuality, gender identity, disability, race, age, nationality and religion and oppression linked with class and economic status.

Our aims are:-

1 To give bisexuals a strong, valid identity within the lesbian and gay liberation movement in particular and society in general. In order to achieve this we must work as bisexuals within the movement both autonomously and collectively.

2 The elimination of sexism, heterosexism and male-defined sexuality and all forms of oppression.

3 To remove the power which adults have over children and young people so that children and young people have the right to define their own lives and sexuality. Included in this is the provision of an education which adequately reflects the diversity of human sexuality.

4 To create a positive image of differing sexualities and sexual attitudes within the media. This necessitates representative and participatory community control of the media. Also to create a media and a culture of our own.

5 To actively work for the self-organisation of bisexual people and the co-ordination of existing bisexual groups, and to form alliances with other progressive forces, nationally and internationally.

LETTERS etc

bi is not best

Dear Bi-monthly and George and Step whose letter I read in issue 7 about the 'Gay is good but Bi is best' badge, which for me (bisexual) is offensive too, for their clearly stated reasons.

So - a friend works where the badge was produced maybe two years back and he now sees how it is offensive - after talking it over. At the next work meeting he'll bring this up so the badge is not produced any more and we've talked of a way to withdraw the remaining stock.

I will let you know soon when it's settled. I think this is the only source of these badges.

I'm glad to be in contact and that there is a Bi-monthly with contributions like that from George and Step.

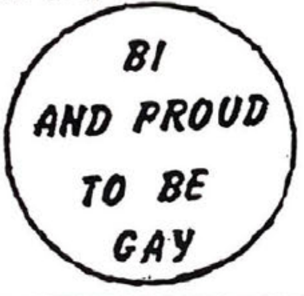
Guy Chapman, London.

new badge

In contrast to the 'Gay is good but Bi is best' badge, a new badge has been produced by Matt Milne, a member of the London Bisexual Group and Gay Pride Week Committee member. The badge reads; 'Bi and proud to be gay'. It first went on sale at the Politics of Bisexuality Conference at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre.

The message is that it is possible to identify both as bisexual and lesbian and gay and that bisexuals do identify with the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation. It is our struggle too.

The badges are available at 20p each plus postage from the London Bisexual Group (or L.B.G.), BM/BI, London WC1N 3XX.



bi-group in Germany

A German Bisexual Group has written to the London Bisexual Group to announce a country-wide meeting of bisexual men and women from the 14th to 17th June in a 'New Castle' in Breidenstein near Marburg (north of Frankfurt). Breidenstein is a small village in a wooded, hilly area in the Lahn valley. The castle is partly occupied by a commune but the ground floor is used for conferences and has small dormitories, meeting rooms, a kitchen, showers etc.

Unfortunately the information came too late for Bi-monthly 8 and it is now too late to book for the weekend. However some people from the Politics of Bisexuality Conference are going to Breidenstein and we hope to build closer relations with German Bisexual Groups as a result of this. A report of the weekend will appear in the next Bi-monthly.

The letter from the German group included the following passage;

Even if people say that bisexuality does not exist, that bisexuals are still undecided, that bisexuals are really homosexual and only want to hide behind the mask of heterosexuality, bisexual women and men do exist. We want to push bisexualityinto the public consciousness. So we want to broadcast our experiences, our development,our lifestyle.

We do not believe in the Utopia of a 'bisexual society' but we do insist on the right to live as bisexual in this society.

Until now we have been able to live as bisexual - but only in 'niches', often accompanied by fears, guilt feelings and personal retreats.

We want to come out of our 'niches'. We see our initiative as a means of supporting ourselves and other bisexuals in a 'bisexual coming-out'.

GAY YOUTH NOT CAUSE OF BAN

The decision to ban bisexuals was not affected one iota by the Lesbian and Gay Youth Movement, because the decision had already been when this episode took place. ('Bisexuals derided' and 'Ban decision influenced by L.G.Y.M.' - BI-MONTHLY No.8) A fact David Smith must be aware of, because we were. When we realised that the Bi-Politics conference was to take place in the Centre, lesbians in L.G.Y.M. asked one of the Centre workers why this was so, since we understood that only lesbian and gay groups were allowed to use the Centre and L.G.Y.M. had earlier been refused the weekend of the13th April for our own conference, on the grounds that 'no bookings were being accepted for that weekend'. The worker didn't know the answer to either question, told us that policy was a matter for the Management Committee, and that was the end of the matter. We made no approach to the management. If we had, it would not have influnced their behaviour; they haven't listened to us since November '82 and show no signs of beginning to. and in any case had already decided that bisexuals are not lesbians and gay men. It is preposterous to claim that L.G.Y.M. is responsible for the ban on bisexuals. We've got the ban on under-14's to worry about.

As for the derision, this we freely admit. For a start, these particular lesbians in L.G.Y.M. felt that bisexual men are heterosexual men whatever else they might be as well, and that they didn't want to share ant space with men who have sex with women and who don't recognise that this is oppressive....

from L.G.Y.M.

DAVID SMITH replies:

At the end of the evening in question we were assured that bisexuals were welcome in the Centre. Not until later did we learn of the ban. So it seemed logical to assume that the decision had been influenced by your inhospitable attitude. I apologise for getting the facts wrong.

The Sexual Fringe

One good thing to come out of the ill-fated first meeting of members of the London Lesbian and Gay Centre was the formation of THE SEXUAL FRINGE. This loosely organised group comprises bisexuals, lesbians, gay men, S and M'ers, transvestites, transexuals, paedophiles - people affected and concerned by bans on groups and on free discussion of sexuality by L.L.G.C. (The ban on bisexuals aside, the Lesbian and Gay Youth Movement are worried about the ban on under-14's and on discussion of paedophilia at their conference.) The group has been meeting every Tuesday evening at L.L.G.C. and the interesting discussions have centred around sexuality. One important conclusion has been that labels are at best inaccurate and at worst divisive. By lobbying members of the Centre the group hopes to overturn bans and restrictions imposed by the Management Committee of the Centre.

New A.I.D.S. info

First, to correct a false impression given in BI-MONTHLY No.8, A.I.D.S. was not introduced into the U.S.A. by gay men. It seems that in the 70's American companies dealing in blood products imported blood into the U.S. from Central Africa, where the disease has been prevalent for many years, but they did not carry out stringent testing of the blood.

The test for antibodies to the HTLV III virus, which causes A.I.D.S., is to be made available at V.D. clinics from June.

The test, however, is not 100% accurate and even a positive result does not mean that you will get A.I.D.S. Most people remain in good health even after being exposed to the virus. Is it worth the inevitable worry?

A more serious problem is that confidentiality about the results of the test is not guaranteed. A doctor may feel obliged to report a positive result to a potential employer wanting medical information.

The Terrence Higgins Trust (which has recently received £25,000 from the Government) has produced an excellent new leaflet - A.I.D.S. more facts for gay men. This and other information is available from the Trust, BM AIDS, London WC1 3XX (tel. 01 273 3745 - 7pm-10pm everyday).

Gender Blind, Ambi-Affectionate, Versatile

Visions of Bisexual Pride

reprinted from

Gay Community News, U.S.A.

Reports on a bisexual conference in the U.S.A.

We are growing. Last year's conference in Hartford drew 150 people. On March 2 this year, 250 people who call themselves ambi-affectionate, androgynous, asexual, bisexual, byke, gay, gender blind, half gay, het, lesbian, and versatile came to the Old Baptist Church in Cambridge to explore the space 'somewhere between' and to develop new visions of bisexuality. The conference was organised by members of the Boston Bisexual Women's and Men's Networks. It brought people from all over New England, to form their own networks, to write a book, and to open the eyes of people in the gay and straight worlds so they can see us, not as confused, not as swingers, but as bisexual individuals.

Robyn Ochs pointed out in her keynote address that we share the oppression of gay people in a special way. We are often the primary contact to the gay community for heterosexuals, yet we cannot say to the boss who would fire us, 'Please just reduce my hours to half time, I'm only bisexual.' We cannot say to the basher, 'Please, just beat me on one side. I'm only half gay.'

Some early subjects for discussion were, 'How can bi women and men meet more often?' 'Doesn't 'bisexual' connote the sexual too much?' 'Isn't everyone really bisexual?' 'How can we open both our closet doors at once?'

The issue of giving power in relationships interested me most. I disagreed sharply with the general feeling that it was mostly an issue in male-male relationships. In my relationships with men, I feel free to touch anywhere and anytime; I can leave scars; I find it easier to voice my feelings about how we spend our time. With women I tend to hold back and watch out for relics of male privilege. How patronising! My discoveries about myself in relation to men are teaching me what I have been denying of myself with women.

Later workshops were more ambitious. First, a set of dialogues with each other aimed at developing new visions of ourselves and increasing our community. And then a set of workshops in which we faced outwards on both a personal and a political level. I found this part overbearingly positive.

I remember two themes dominating discussions: gays and lesbian myths. Some-one complained, 'The bisexual community accepts the lesbian and gay community with open arms, so there is no reason why the gay community shouldn't.' Others couldn't understand how gays - who are always being told they are promiscuous, or going through a phase, or not living up to their gender roles - can turn around and try to peg those attitudes on us. Are you gay or straight? The answer is not, 'Yes, a little of both.' The answer is, 'No!' No, and don't ask me to explain myself when I switch from masculine at one time to feminine at another. No, and don't presume that I relate to everyone I meet on a sexual basis.

The second area of disappointment with the gay community focused on the disillusionments women had had with the lesbian ideal. One woman regretted that there are certain things you can't do because you are a lesbian.

Another resented lesbians who considered her a terrible bet. But there was more anger around the myth that women can't hurt women, the assumption that all lesbians must be feminists. How can a lesbian turn out to be racist and sexist? How can a woman sexually assault another woman?

I think that most women still believe that women tend to be more tender than men, but must admit that some women can be less tender than most men. I hope some realise that some men can be even more tender than most women.

I leave you with an image. The image of the bisexual as a fence-sitter. We don't have to fall off the fence. If we all sit on it, it will collapse and stop bothering you. **Roger Frye**

Assumptions and Prejudice

The notion of privilege fascinates me. In a societal sense there are always those who have privilege and those who do not. As gays/lesbians, we have challenged the idea of heterosexual prerogative, yet how often have we examined our own assumptions towards others' sexuality.

Where does a bisexual person find a safety zone in the sexual battle-field of the 1980's? The conference on bisexuality held in Cambridge brought to light myriad questions faced by a community in transition. Are we het-identified Some are. There were elders with wives or husbands, and children long grown. There were same-sex couples holding anxious hands waiting for some enlightenment on the subject. There were no two alike in this group. Our stories are different and so are our lives.

A sense of direction seemed to evolve through the day-long process of the conference. The myths were disposed of: confused people afraid to come out as real gays/lesbians. There is a basic need for all surrounding communities to be educated, for people to start confronting the fact that there is often a rather slender space between assumption and prejudice. The most difficult task I have faced recently is my own bisexuality, coming out in the context of my lesbian world. As gay/lesbian people we cannot afford to waste time arguing about who is more oppressed.

The basic components of a human relationship are person-to-person 'input, output, electricity.' The need for intimacy is fundamental. Everyone willingly admits that good things are hard to find; people, time, sex. If unfettered, there is an inherent flexibility in bisexuality that shows great promise for all communities concerned. Just as gays/lesbians need allies who are unafraid of their lives, the same holds true for their bisexual counterparts. Closets are areas of confinement; double closets, as exist for bisexuals, are just as uncomfortable.

The conference as a whole was successful; the organisers deserve a great deal of applause and respect. I'm looking forward to seeing more people of colour. Most of all, though, I'm simply looking forward to the future.

Veneita Porter

Allies to Gay/Lesbian Liberation

I attended the bisexual conference as a lesbian ally to bisexual people. (Gay and heterosexual allies were welcome at the conference, though in my wanderings I found only a few other lesbians and gay men, one or two straight women, and no straight men.) My reasons for being there were both political and personal.

The event was co-sponsored by the Boston Bisexual Women's Network, a group a friend of mine helped start. This friend provided crucial support to me during a crisis in my life, at a time when many of my lesbian friends disappeared. At that time she honoured and trusted me enough to let me see the considerable pain she had experienced when she was forced to choose between the women's community and her bisexual identity, and her confusion as she struggled to maintain her commitment to feminism and gay liberation without a sense of belonging or support from any community. When I see signs of a growing bisexual community - and particularly of a political movement of bisexuals willing to identify strongly with the goals of lesbian and gay liberation - I can't help but think of my friend and feel profoundly moved and proud of her.

Not everyone at this conference was like my friend. In fact one of the interesting things about the participants is that no one seemed to be like anyone else. Refreshingly, there seems to be no bisexual-clone 'look' yet.

cont'd at foot of page 9

BOOKS: Christ advocates bisexuality, women struggle for equality and Lancelet loves Arthur.

Two books have come my way recently both of which - in their own way - provide radical reworkings of two of the greatest 'myths' of our society - the Arthurian legends and the Bible story. In doing this 'The Mists of Avalon' and 'The Wild Girl' bring into question some of the basic assumptions about how Christianity in its present form became established and about the role of women in Christian tradition.

Marion Bradley's THE MISTS OF AVALON has been acclaimed by Isaac Asimov as 'the best retelling of the Arthurian saga I have ever read'. In a vast panoramic sweep, the book recounts the rise and fall of Camelot - through the eyes of the women involved. Igraine (Arthur's mother), Viviane (high-priestessof Avalon and Lady of the Lake) and Morgause (Queen of Lothian, powerful ruler, mother of some of Arthur's best Knights). All three are sisters descended from the royal line of Avalon, an island in a lake shrouded in mists where the ancient Goddess is worshipped as the giver and taker of life. The High-Priestess and Lady of the Lake reigns supreme here and the Druids, including the Merlin of Britain, bow to her superior wisdom. She - like the other priestesses - is trained in medicine, languages, music,history, tradition and magic.

The priests of Christianity - who in contrast to the priestesses are ignorant, bigoted fools - are attempting to wipe out the influence of this ancient religion. They want to replace a nurturing, giving but nevertheless demanding Goddess with a wrathful, proscriptive and vengeful God. The far-reaching effects of this on all aspects of life are felt most harshly by the women. The ruling of the country passes from Queens to Kings, inheritance passes from the female line to the male line, women are no longer allowed to choose a consort, a lover or a husband for themselves but are treated as the chattels of men, chastity is imposed on women, herb-lore - especially knowledge of how to induce miscarriage - is treated as witchcraft. As an analysis of how women lost power, independence and control over their own lives, the book is fascinating.

The doings of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table are incidental to the power-struggle for influence over Arthur between Cwenhwyfar, educated in a convent and devoutly Christian, and Morgaine, daughter of Igraine, successor to Viviane and Lady of Avalon.

One quibble I have with the book is that it is very much a story of power politics, in which non-aristocratic people have very little part to play. However the events in the personal and mostly very tragic lives of all of the women are universal and timeless, and they give the book an almost contemporary feel. As the women grow from infancy to old age everything that concerns them is dealt with in a frank and sympathetic manner - puberty, contraception, abortion, child-birth, rape, infertility, husbands, lovers, incest, access to education, accessto power.

Bisexuality is also touched upon, but in a rather inconsistent way for an otherwise very thoughtful book. Morgaine's relationships with Arthur, Lancelet and the Merlin are ultimately deeply unsatisfactory, and only with Raven, a sister priestess, does she experience the profound love of someone who shares the most fundamental concerns of her own soul. However, when Lancelet confesses that he loves Arthur even more than Gwenhwyfar, Morgaine herself accepts uncritically that this is a dark, shameful secret. If Marion Bradley's vision of the Goddess religion can encompass love between women, why not love between men?

blasphemy trial looming over new 'Bible story'

Michele Roberts' 'The Wild Girl' takes the form of a long-lost gospel - the gospel according to Mary Magdalene. Inspired by the Nag Hammadi gospels which were suppressed by the early Church because they embodied an alternative interpretation of Creation - including a female principle involved in the creation of the world and a less submissive alternative to Eve.- the book proposes a theology in which no one can achieve salvation except by reawakening and reconciling both the male and the female parts of themselves. Mary Magdalene is a rebellious girl, unwilling to accept the strictures imposed on her behaviour by the Hebrew culture which sees women as the source of all evil. Running away from home, she is trained as a coutesan in Egypt and learns the healing arts which later allow her to be the prime mover behind the miracle of the raising of her brother Lazarus from the dead. She becomes a prostitute to support her brother and sister but only with Jesus is she able to know the real coming together of souls and the merging of the male and female principles which is essential for a complete knowledge of the male and female principles in the Deity. The company of Jesus is seen as a caring, sharing society where bisexuality and gayness are equally valid expressions of love and means of achieving knowledge and salvation, and where the thoughts, feelings and experience of women are a vital counterpart to those of men. Peter's is the only dissenting voice in this as he clings to the Hebrew tradition of regarding women as the means by which men are seduced away from God and in this he embodies what has become and still remains the dominant Christian tradition.

Something in all of this has offended Sir Peter Mills, Tory MP for Devon West and Torridge and Chairman of the 'Christian Fellowship'. Without actually having read the book he has recommended to the Attorney General, Sir Michael Havers, that the book should be prosecuted for blasphemy.

David Smith

CONFERENCE IN U.S.A.

The candour and exploratory spirit of the discussions meant dealing with some random non-feminist and/or anti-gay remarks from 'less conscious' participants but for the most part other bisexuals dealt with them very quickly. In particular, many of the women - either because they had, as a couple of them joked ironically, 'gone through a lesbian phase,' or because they are still very connected to the women's community - were aware of the need to acknowledge the heterosexual privilege they do enjoy when relating with men and also their debt to feminism. At the same time, they expressed tremendous bitterness about the women's movement's intolerance and distrust of them.

It was hard hearing individual stories, both about the inhospitality of the gay and lesbian movement to such close cousins and about experiences with homophobia parallel to those of gay people. But the sense of newness and the tremendous need of the participants to talk to one another reminded me of the gay and feminist movements in earlier, more optimistic days. That enthusiasm and generation of new ideas could be an asset to the gay and lesbian movement, should we choose to welcome it.

PAM MITCHELL

LIVING AND SHARING TOGETHER

HERE is an idea.
A small (to get bigger) group of people living together - sharing sex, political beliefs, pacifism, vegan, vogetarian, trust, (child-care?).
Equal number of men and women. Everyone interrelating with everyone else. Each person having their own space when they need it but sharing otherwise. Countryside, peaceful but with city/town access. Anyone interested?

Sarah and Ben, 36 Mackie Avenue,
Patcham, Brighton, Sussex.

FEMALE CIRCUMCISION is still prevalent in the Arab world, in Africa ... and in Britain.

When I visited Egypt last year, I was shocked and appalled to hear that female circumcision is still practised there. I was inclined to believe that the young Christian medical student who told me this was only trying to cast the Arab majority in a bad light. He was urbanised and sophisticated and he seemed to be implying that the Arabs were backward and bound by out of date tradition. The Arabs I had met in Cairo and Alexandria were no less sophisticated than he was.

And yet female circumcision is still prevalent in many countries of the Arab world and in West Africa and among communities from those countries now resident in Britain. The practice varies from removal of the clitoris to removal of all external genitalia including the lips of the vulva and sewing up of the vagina leaving only a tiny hole for urinating. This latter practice is known as infibulation. The operation is performed on young girls of between 7 and 12,

Circumcision and infibulation have been traditional for hundreds of years, but contrary to widespread belief there is nothing in the Koran which stipulates or condones the practice. Rather it continues because of uncompromising demands that a woman be obviously a virgin when she is married. Boys in some Arab and West African cultures are brought up to believe that to marry an uncircumcised woman would be dishonourable, and consequently mothers of young girls, however they might feel about the practice, have their daughters circumcised because of fears that their future happiness may depend on it.

The London Black Women's Health Action Project has been fighting against the practice of female circumcision for the past two years but faces enormous difficulties. As yet there has been no research done on the prevalence of female mutilation amongst African and Arab women in London. It is known that amongst Somali women in Tower Hamlets in East London few have escaped infibulation and more moderate forms of mutilation are practised among Sudanese, West African and Arab women. Part of the difficulty in making an enquiry into the practice is the isolation of many of these women because of language differences, refugee status etc.

Because of the long-standing traditional status of female circumcision, it is felt that a vitally important first step is an educational campaign. Male children must be weaned away from expecting to marry an infibulated woman. Young women must be given support in dealing with the conflict between their own culture and the demands of life in Britain. Women in general must be helped to overcome the difficulties of breaking with tradition.

A bill designed to outlaw female circumcision has been introduced into Parliament by Marion Roe M.P. and is supported by Anne Clwyd, David Crouch, Anne Winterton, Jo Richardson and Clement Freud. However, like a previous bill, it is being opposed on two grounds. Firstly the bill makes no provision for a period of transition during which a programme of health and sex education could be carried out in the communities concerned. By not even acknowledging that such a provision is essential the bill will succeed only in driving the practice undergroun . It will frighten women who will be put into an impossible position. Mothers (who often perform the operation on their daughters) will be turned into potential criminals. The bill will also encourage the growth of a backstreet industry thriving on the confusion and fears of the Black community.

Secondly the Bill is thought by the Commission of Racial Equality to be racist in that it will prohibit circumcision for women 'where the operation is required as a matter of custom or ritual' but does not make it unlawful when the operation is 'necessary for the physical or mental health' of a woman on whom it is performed. At present both black and white women may have an operation involving the cutting or removal of the clitoris. This is normally done if the clitoris is very long and its size causes distres to the woman concerned. However, if the bill is passed by Parliament, women from communities where circumcision is 'required as a matter of custom or ritual' will not be able to have the operation on medical grounds no matter how distresnd they might be by the thought of breaking with a cultural tradition.

Film -'Lucia' - fighting machismo in Cuba

During the recent festival of films, music, theatre and discussions to illustrate the struggle for freedom in Latin American countries, one of the highlights was the showing of the film 'Lucia', a black and white masterpiece, made in 1968 by the Cuban director, Humberto Solas.

In three sections, dealing with events in 1895 (during the uprising against the Spanish), in the 1930's (at the time of the establishment of the new republic) and in the 1960's (after the Castro led revolution), the film deals with the role of women in these struggles. and with the ongoing fight against machismo. The central charachter in each section is called Lucia. The Lucia of 1895 is closeted away in a restrictive, bourgeois, all-women environment in which the main activities are sewing for the independence fighters, gossip and silly games. Any direct involvement by the women in the struggle against the Spanish is out of the question.

Faced with the prospect of a life as an 'old-maid', Lucia falls in love with Raphael, a spy for the Spanish who ruthlessly exploits her to discover the whereabouts of Lucia's family's remote coffee plantation which has become a rebel stronghold in the hands of Felipe, Lucia's brother.

Lucia' isolation from politics' activity meant that, not until too late did she realize the bloody consequences of leading Raphael to the plantation.

In a final moment of revenge for the death of her brother, Lucia stabs Raphael to death.

In a final moment of revenge lucia stabs Raphael to death for the dual betrayal of herself and of Cuba. In this act she finds a common bond with the hitherto derided and despised mad vagabond woman (who had been raped by Spanish soldiers), and thus a link is forged between the two women despite their widely differing class and social status.

The Lucia of the 1930's is less closeted and more involved in political and economic life. She leaves her family and works in a cigar factory to support her urban guerilla/revolutionary lover. She risks imprisonment by covering the factory toilet walls with revolutionary graffiti and is involved with political discussions between her lover and his comrades. Nevertheless, because her role is mainly supportive, she is left alone with no part to play when the revolution goes wrong and her lover is gunned down in the street.

By the 1960's, in post-revolutionary Cuba, women's position has improved immeasurably. Women are working alongside men in the co-ops and in the representative bodies which make decisions. Some of the men have not accepted these changes however. When Lucia marries, her husband takes her away from work and keeps her imprisoned at home so that she will not meet other men. These actions are considered to be retrogressive and almost ludicrous, and when Lucia insists on her right to be taught to read by a visiting male teacher and on her right to return to work, she is aggressively defended by the whole of the community.

David Smith

The Alien - Pat White

I am an alien Born into a hostile world
A place controlled by men of steel hearts
And minds vile with power Bloated egos
Hating anyone that can't / won't accept
Their twisted values warped morals
A standard mould is made for all predestined
Not to be the correct size and shape is a crime
Punishable by a living death
Years are wasted unlearning the conditioning
Self doubt and guilt at being different
A youth torn asunder Who and why am I?
War between a desire to live creatively
And the despair of trying to defy gravity
Then seeking other similar rebels
Exchanging uniforms conforming to nonconformity
Again despair at not fitting 'in' Escape
Plodding through a narcotic haze No light
Dis-passionately watching the demise of those
Who did not make it dragged down by pressure
The gas train tracks the pills 20th.C. exit
Dying young I wished but could not join them
So shed a single tear and carried on Alone
Now self knowledge I am and will be as I am
Learning to fly the falling feeling passes in time
Losing the chains of bondage and becoming whole
Joy at finding others on parallel pathways
No longer alone there is light in the distance
And though the cold wind still blows from the future
Perhaps it's all been worth it in the end.

Defend

Gay's The Word Campaign

LESBIAN & GAY BOOKS DETAINED!

On Monday 24th June pre-trial proceedings will open against the directors of Gay's the Word, the lesbian and gay bookshop in Marchmont Street, Bloomsbury, London. The directors are charged with importing indecent material. Many of the books in question are widely available in high-street bookshops. However Customs officials are allowed to seize books which are merely 'indecent'. Yet British law only forbids the publication of 'obscene' books. So it can be an offence to import books which are already freely available having been published in this country. And Customs guidelines apply much stricter criteria to lesbian and gay books than to heterosexual books.

Gay's the Word is more than a bookshop. It is a symbol of the lesbian and gay community and needs to be protected. Do not let the trial proceed unnoticed. Write to your M.P. Write to your local paper. Write to your local councillor asking him/her to condemn the proceedings against G.T.W. to support the Defend G.T.W. Campaign and to write directly to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is responsible for Customs. Try to get a motion passed by your union branch. Send a donation to the Defence Fund, 38, Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP.

OUT

Out in the Open

People talking about being Gay or Bisexual

by Stephanie Norris and Emma Read (Pan, £2.50, 223pp)

The publication of a book exclusively about lesbian, gay male and bisexual people's experiences ought to be a matter for celebration. Unfortunately, however, 'Out in the Open' is not all that one could have wished for- in fact I'm almost glad it has such an unattractive cover (it's supposed to be a book partly sticking out of a brown paper bag; a clever enough idea, but a visually drab effect).

The book consists of a large number of quotes from and case histories of individual lesbians (here concealed behind the supposedly all-embracing word 'gay'), gay men and bisexuals. These are sorted into neat categories, with a chapter devoted to each: 'The Young Gay', 'The Late Starter', 'The Bisexual', etc. They are mostly well-chosen, with a fairly wide range of attitudes and experiences. But the fact that they are selected from people's introductory letters for 'Gayway', a gay dating service that Emma Read used to run, means that there is inevitably a bias towards people who tend to choose that particular method of meeting people rather than those who use groups, pubs, clubs, cottages or whatever.

The section on 'The Bisexual' annoyed me intensely. It seems to have a narrower selection of quotes than other sections, and many of them are from people who hardly seem to be bisexual at all and would have been better suited to the section on 'The Married Gay'. The editorial voice intrudes to tell us that 'bisexuals *invariably* prefer one sex to the other, and that 'In contrast to the homosexual who sleeps with the opposite sex and the heterosexual who sleeps with the same sex, there are men and women who genuinely think of themselves as bisexual. In other words, *despite* their sexual or emotional preference for one sex or the other, they *choose* to call themselves bisexual.' [My italics.] It seems almost as though the authors don't really believe we exist.

I have no doubt that the book will be highly enlightening to straight readers who want to find out something of what it feels like to be gay, but I am disappointed both in the treatment of bisexuality and in the lack of any kind of analysis of why lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are oppressed and what can be done about it.

Kate Fearnley

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66A Church Rd.
St. Leonards on Sea
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tel. (0424) 435931

L.B.G.

London Bisexual Group Programme

JUNE

TUES 4	ALTERNATIVE HEALING - RAY EDWARDS
TUES 11	VIDEO - JOHN
TUES 18	YOUNG LESBIAN GROUP - DENISE WORME LESBIAN AND GAY HISTORY - MICHAEL
TUES 25	STEREOTYPES - GOOD OR BAD? - RACHEL PLANNING FOR LESBIAN AND GAY PRIDE MARCH

JULY

TUES 2	PLANNING MEETING FOR FUTURE PROGRAMME
TUES 9	VIDEO - JOHN
TUES 16	SEPARATISM IN THE LESBIAN AND GAY COMMUNITY - ELLEN
TUES 23	COMING OUT TO ONE'S FAMILY - LIZ
TUES 30	BISEXUALITY IN LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS - - CRIS MENTAL HEALTH AND BISEXUALITY - ANDY

METTINGS ARE HELD IN HEAVEN, UNDER THE ARCHES, VILLIERS STREET, CHARING CROSS.

MEET AT 8pm to start at 8.30

WOMEN ARE PARTICULARLY WELCOME ON THE THIRD TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH.

AT EACH MEETING THERE IS A 'PERSONAL GROUP' FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT TO TALK ABOUT THEIR VIEW OF BISEXUALITY.

SPECIAL EVENTS

JUNE 16 - 1pm - PICNIC - Kenwood House Lawn - Hampstead Heath

JUNE 22 - 12.30pm - Hyde Park - Lesbian Strength March

see also pages 3,6&7

This issue...

COMPILED AND EDITED BY DAVID SMITH

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DAVID SMITH, KATE FEARNLEY, AL. PAT WHITE, EVERY ONE AT THE CONFERENCE and GAY COMMUNITY NEWS.

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bi-monthly no.10

The COPY DATE for BI-MONTHLY No.10 is FRIDAY 19th JULY. All contributions are warmly welcomed.

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The MEN'S ANTI-SEXIST NEWSLETTER (now hugely improved in quality) exists as a forum of exchange of news, ideas, thoughts, feelings and information for men who are challenging sexism and particularly for people who wish to find for men alternative roles to those which society casts for them.

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SIGMA conference

A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE has been organised by SIGMA, the support group for people with gay or bisexual partners.

SATURDAY 28th SEPTEMBER, 1985

ST. PANCRAS CHURCH HOUSE,
LANCING STREET,
EUSTON,
LONDON NW1

Under the title UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER there will be various workshops including Self Image and Self Responsibility, Violence within Relationships, Defence Mechanisms eg. Alcoholism, claustrophobia etc., A.I.D.S. - the facts.... The facilitators will include Penny and Ray Edwards, Beth Webster and other experienced counsellors.
The cost will be £5.00 and further details and a booking form are available from The Organiser, 30, Durnsford Road, Wimbledon, London SW19.